

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for managing interrupts in an instant messaging application, comprising:

receiving an interrupt request from an interrupting contact during an ongoing instant messaging conversation between at least two contacts each using a communications device, wherein the interrupt request is received by at least one of the at least two contacts;

determining at least one of whether the interrupting contact has an interrupt priority ranking higher than, or at least as high as, an interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and whether an interrupting conversation has a higher priority compared to the ongoing instant messaging conversation; and

interrupting the ongoing instant messaging conversation in response to a predetermined one of the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact being higher than, or at least as high as, the interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and the interrupting conversation having a higher interrupt priority ranking compared to the interrupt priority ranking of the ongoing instant messaging conversation and independent of a location of the communications device being used by each of the at least two contacts.

2. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising selecting a precedence between interrupting the instant messaging conversation based on the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact relative to the interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts and the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting conversation relative to the interrupt priority ranking of the instant messaging conversation.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising sending a contact busy message to the interrupting contact in response to at least one of the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact being no higher than the interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts and the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting conversation being no higher than the interrupt priority ranking of the ongoing instant messaging conversation.

6. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising:
presenting a graphical user interface (GUI) representation of the interrupting conversation in a foreground of a display in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation; and
transferring a keyboard focus to a type-in box of the interrupting conversation in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

7. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising presenting a graphical user interface (GUI) representation of the instant messaging conversation in a background of a display in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

8. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising sending an interrupt notification to any of the at least two contacts of the instant messaging conversation not contacted by the interrupting contact in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

9. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising resuming the instant messaging conversation in response to the interrupting conversation being completed.

10. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising setting an instant messaging conversation priority.

11. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising selectively blocking interrupts.

12. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 11, further comprising overriding an interrupts block.

13. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising assigning an interrupt priority ranking to all contacts in an instant messaging contacts list in a user's communications device.

14. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 13, wherein assigning an interrupt priority ranking comprises one of assigning the interrupt priority ranking by placing all contacts in a predetermined order in the contact list or auxiliary contact list on the user's communications device and by assigning a contact priority number to each contact in the contact list.

15. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising deriving an interrupt priority ranking for each contact from a Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) or from a reporting chain.

16. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for managing interrupts in an instant messaging application, comprising:

receiving an interrupt request from an interrupting contact during an ongoing instant messaging conversation between at least two contacts each using a communications device, wherein the interrupt request is received by at least one of the at least two contacts;

interrupting the instant messaging conversation based on a set of interrupt rules and independent of a location of the communications device being used by each of the at least two

contacts, wherein interrupting the instant messaging conversation based on the set of interrupt rules comprises:

permitting the ongoing instant messaging conversation to be interrupted in response to interrupts being selectively permitted; and

determining that the interrupting conversation has an interrupt priority ranking higher than an interrupt priority ranking of the ongoing conversation; and

sending an interrupt blocked message to the interrupting contact in response to interrupts being selectively blocked.

17.-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 16, further comprising presenting a GUI representation of the interrupting conversation in a foreground of a display in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

21. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 16, further comprising sending an interrupt notification to any of the at least two contacts of the instant messaging conversation not contacted by the interrupting contact in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

22.-39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for managing interrupts in an instant messaging application, comprising:

receiving an interrupt request from an interrupting contact or user during an ongoing instant messaging conversation between at least two contacts or users each using a communications device, wherein the interrupt request is received by at least one of the at least two contacts;

determining whether the interrupting contact or user has an interrupt priority ranking in a contacts list higher than, or at least as high as, a priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts or users in the contacts list participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation; and

interrupting the ongoing instant messaging conversation in response to the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact or user being higher than, or at least as high as, each of the at least two contacts or users and independent of a location of the communications device being used by each of the at least two contacts.

41. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 40, further comprising dividing the contacts list into a primary contacts list and a normal contacts list, wherein the primary contacts list permits a user to specify the interrupt priority ranking for selected contacts by listing contacts in an order according to their respective interrupt priority order and wherein the normal contacts lists contacts alphabetically.

42. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 41, further comprising blocking the contacts on the normal contacts list and that are not on the primary contacts list from interrupting the ongoing instant messaging conversation.

43. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 40, further comprising indicating in the contacts list when a contact is online and available to enter into a new instant messaging conversation.

44. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 40, further comprising representing the contacts list as a graphical user interface including a table comprising one column for indicating an online status of each contact in the contacts lists and another column for an interrupt priority ranking of each contact.

45. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 44, further comprising assigning a numerical value to each contact that specifies the interrupt priority ranking of each contact.

46. (Currently Amended) The computer implemented method of claim 40, further comprising presenting a graphical user interface to each participant in an active instant messaging conversation, wherein the graphical user interface comprises an input means to enter or select a priority of the active instant messaging conversation.

Please add new claims 47-56:

47. (New) A system for managing interrupts in an instant messaging application, comprising:

a communications device for receiving an interrupt from an interrupting contact during an instant messaging conversation between a contact using the communications device and at least one other contact using another communications device;

a module stored in a memory of the communications device and operable on the communications device to determine at least one of whether the interrupting contact has an interrupt priority ranking higher than, or at least as high as, an interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and whether an interrupting conversation has a higher priority compared to the ongoing instant messaging conversation; and

another module stored in the memory of the communications device and operable on the communications device to interrupt the ongoing instant messaging conversation in response to a predetermined one of the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact being higher than, or at least as high as, the interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and the interrupting conversation having a higher interrupt priority ranking compared to the interrupt priority ranking of the ongoing instant messaging conversation and independent of a location of a communications device being used by each of the at least two contacts.

48. (New) The system of claim 47, further comprising a set of interrupt rules, wherein the set of interrupt rules comprise a rule permitting the instant messaging conversation to be interrupted in response to interrupts being selectively permitted and the interrupting contact having an interrupt priority ranking at least as high as an interrupt priority ranking of each of the contacts and independent of the location of the communications devices being used by each of contacts.

49. (New) The system of claim 47, further comprising a set of interrupt rules, wherein the set of interrupt rules comprises a rule permitting the instant messaging conversation to be interrupted in response to interrupts being selectively permitted and the interrupting conversation having a higher interrupt priority ranking than an interrupt priority ranking of the instant messaging conversation and independent of the location of a communications device being used by each of the contacts.

50. (New) The system of claim 47, further comprising a set of interrupt rules, wherein the set of interrupt rules comprises a rule permitting interruption of the instant messaging conversation in response to a predetermined one of, one of the interrupting contact having a selected interrupt priority ranking at least as high as a interrupt priority ranking of each of the contacts, or the interrupting conversation having an interrupt priority ranking at least as high as an interrupt priority ranking of the instant messaging conversation.

51. (New) The system of claim 47, further comprising means for presenting a GUI to a user to set a conversation priority.

52. (New) A computer readable storage medium having computer usable program code embodied therewith for managing interrupts in an instant messaging application, the computer readable storage medium comprising:

computer usable program code configured to receive an interrupt request from an interrupting contact or user during an ongoing instant messaging conversation between at least two contacts or users;

computer usable program code configured to determine at least one of whether the interrupting contact has an interrupt priority ranking higher than, or at least as high as, an interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and whether an interrupting conversation has a higher priority compared to the ongoing instant messaging conversation; and

computer usable program code configured to interrupt the ongoing instant messaging conversation in response to a predetermined one of the interrupt priority ranking of the interrupting contact being higher than, or at least as high as, the interrupt priority ranking of each of the at least two contacts participating in the ongoing instant messaging conversation and the interrupting conversation having a higher interrupt priority ranking compared to the interrupt priority ranking of the ongoing instant messaging conversation and independent of a location of a communications device being used by each of the at least two contacts.

53. (New) The computer readable storage medium of claim 52, further comprising computer usable program code configured to send a contact busy message to the interrupting contact in response to one of the interrupting contact having an interrupt priority ranking no higher than each of the at least two contacts or the interrupting conversation having an interrupt priority ranking no higher than the interrupt priority ranking of the instant messaging conversation.

54. (New) The computer readable storage medium of claim 52, further comprising:

computer usable program code configured to present a graphical user interface (GUI) representation of the interrupting conversation in a foreground of a display in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation; and

computer usable program code configured to transfer a keyboard focus to a type-in box of the interrupting conversation in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

55. (New) The computer readable storage medium of claim 52, further comprising computer usable program code configured to send an interrupt notification to any of the at least two

contacts of the instant messaging conversation not contacted by the interrupting contact in response to interrupting the instant messaging conversation.

56. (New) The computer readable storage medium of claim 52, further comprising computer usable program code configured to presenting a GUI to a user to set an instant messaging conversation priority.